A NEW COMBINATION IN PITHECELLOBIUM

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Jean Luis Berlandier published extracts from his journal, making premature mention of several binomials which he referred to as designating plants described in his manuscript (a botanical manuscript that apparently has not been published). Several of these names are nomina nuda, and others were superfluous when printed. However, a few are referred to in terms that clearly permit their identification with well known species whose previously accepted names they antedate. Thus, Juglans microcarpa Berlandier replaced J. rupestris Engelmann some decades ago.

Another Berlandier plant name that is readily identified through its accompanying discursive description is Mimosa ebano, which has been published three times over Berlandier's name. The precisely identical descriptive discussion of these three publications, translated from the Spanish, is here quoted from Mosaico Mexicano 4: 418, 1840:

"In the vicinity of the port of Matamoros, we have observed scarcely five species of mimosas (mesquites) and only two merit our attention; not so much by the utility that may be obtained of them, as by being very common in all areas. The first is a luxuriant tree, scantily spiny, called ebony, but very different from the true ebony, or Diospyros ebanum, of authors. The plant that concerns us is a pretty species of mimosa which we have described in our manuscripts with the name of mimosa ebano, to record its name, very common in all the country. It is notable for its dark shade, for the properties of its fruits, and for the central part of the wood, which has a black color very distinct from the other and to which it owes its name. Though the wood is durable, its brittleness does not permit it to be considered useful for many purposes. The toasted seeds, ground and taken like coffee, are purgative and not disagreeable; but these same seeds, only toasted and eaten in large quantities, as many herders do, produce in those who are not accustomed to this food a mild dishcarge of the urethra similar in all respects to a blennorrhoea that does not damage and that has no consequence at all."

This plant is clearly identical with Pithecellobium flexicaule (Benth.) Coult. The habit, degree of spininess, wood color, and vernacular name (in a Mimosoid in Tamaulipas) could be descriptive of no other species. The uses of the seeds described by Berlandier are very similar to those described by Standley for P. flexicaule (Contr. U.S. Nat.

Herb. 23: 394. 1922). but Standley offers no information on their physiological effects. Standley reports "ebano" applied to other genera of Mimosoideae in Sinaloa and Oaxaca, but in Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Texas the vernacular name belongs strictly to Pithecellobium flexicaule. The nomenclature, therefore, requires the following recombination:

PITHECELLOBIUM EBANO (Berlandier) comb. nov.

Mimosa ebano Berlandier, Mosaico Mexicano 4: 418. 1840; in Berlandier and Chovel, Diario Viage Comision de Limites, p. 293. 1850; Bol. Soc. Mex. Geogr. Estad. 5: 126. 1857.
Lectotype: Berlandier 2262, without data, C.W. Short Herbarium, ANS (Phila.); duplicate, "arb. 20-25 pied. vulgo "Ebano". (El Encinal) de S. Fernando à Santander. Berlandier legit 8bre 1830. Mexique. Berlandier Nº 2262," F (dupl. ex G)

Acacia flexicaulis Benth., London Journ. Bot. 1: 505. 1842.

Pithecolobium texense Coult., Contr. U.S. Nat. Herb. 1: 37. 1890; Bot. Gaz. 15: 270. 1890.

Pithecolobium flexicaule (Benth.) Coult. Contr. U.S. Nat. Herb. 2: 101. 1891.

Berlandier discussed the "ebano" in his various journal manuscripts as he encountered the species in Veracruz, Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Texas, but he made no mention of the plant beyond the range of the species as it is currently understood.